

The assault on mutual respect has pervaded Congress. Republicans, desperate after 40 years in the minority, are turning ever more negative. Some nervous Democrats follow suit. Not only do dissident members attack the personal integrity of our president, but they seem out to weaken and destroy Congress itself. Absurdly, they think this is what the public wants.

Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole and House Whip Newt Gingrich recently pledged support on the Capitol steps for a constitutional amendment to limit congressional terms. House members should not be trusted, the argument goes, to serve faithfully for more than six years, nor senators for more than 12.

But at the heart of this gimmicky assault on the Constitution lies an unspoken assumption that the public cannot be trusted to choose wisely. The hypocrisy of the position that these two publicly profess is transparent in the fact that Dole has been in Congress continuously since 1960, and Gingrich, who would limit future colleagues to no more than three terms, is seeking his ninth.

If their logic should ever prevail, the legislative branch will be vastly weakened, bereft of strong and experienced leaders, much more at the mercy of an authoritative executive branch. There will be no Sam Rayburns, no Robert A. Tafts, no Arthur Vandenberg, or Barry Goldwaters to curb the presidential appetite for power or to soften its occasional rashness with their wisdom. And civility.●

#### NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION ACT

● Mr. SARBANES. Mr. President, I rise today to draw to the attention of the Senate my concern about declines in recent decades in voter participation in local and national elections. In the 1988 election, only about half of those citizens eligible to vote went to the polls. While turnout improved during the last Presidential election, voter participation remains low in this country compared to other advanced democratic countries. According to the Congressional Research Service, only 61 percent of U.S. citizens eligible to vote are registered. While there are many reasons why people do not vote, studies indicate that the major reason is that they are not registered. In fact, the Bureau of Census reports that voter turnout of registered voters in Presidential elections typically exceeds 85 percent.

Recognizing the need to establish uniform national voter registration procedures to allow greater opportunities for all eligible citizens to participate in the electoral process, the U.S. Congress adopted the National Voter Registration Act early in the 103d Congress, legislation I was proud to support. The National Voter Registration Act, also known as the motor-voter bill, provides greater opportunities for all eligible citizens to participate in the electoral process.

The methods for voter registration established by the legislation—by mail, as part of drivers license renewal, and when visiting Government agencies—are well tested and successful methods for registering voters. And, in fact, States which have implemented the motor-voter provisions have experienced significant increases in voter

registration. About 3,700 voters were registered in Washington State within the first 7 days of motor-voter operation. Florida has been averaging more than 3,000 new voter registrations per day from people obtaining drivers licenses. The successes continue to be documented in other States such as Georgia, where more than 18,000 people have been registered under the new procedures since January 1, 1995, and in Kentucky where 10,000 new voters were registered in the first 10 days of implementation. In my own State of Maryland, approximately 90,000 people have been registered through the Motor Vehicle Administration in 1995 alone, and Maryland election officials expect an additional 900,000 citizens to register under the new system.

While some critics of this legislation have charged that by making voter registration easier, there may be increased opportunities for fraud, the bill includes important safeguards to prevent such fraud. The mail registration form requires a statement of eligibility to vote, an attestation that the applicant meets each requirement of eligibility to vote, and the signature of the applicant under penalty of perjury.

Mr. President, there are further misconceptions surrounding this bill that should be clarified. First, though agencies are required to provide registrants with assistance when requested, the National Voter Registration Act does not require agency personnel to fill out registration forms—it is the applicant who fills out the form. Second, the legislation requires that an applicant be informed that the quality and quantity of Government assistance they receive will not be effected by their willingness or refusal to register. Third, the legislation protects the privacy of the applicant by restricting the use of voter registration information. An applicant has the option of completing the form at home and returning it by mail, and agency employees may not force an individual to register or attempt to persuade an applicant to join a particular political party.

I understand that concerns have also been raised about potential additional costs for State and local governments to implement this legislation. I would simply note that any increased costs for a State to comply with the uniform voter registration standards provided by this legislation would be relatively small, particularly in those States, such as Maryland, that have already taken steps to increase the opportunity for citizens to register to vote. In addition, the legislation provides relief to all States in the form of a postal rate reduction for State and local election officials which will save State and local governments more than \$4 million per year. There are also expected to be savings through the use of uniform registration forms in those States that have not yet adopted uniformity between jurisdictions and because voter registration is now likely to be spread out over the year as people

renew drivers licenses. Consequently, there will be less need to hire additional registrars to handle the higher volume of registration that typically occurs in some States before registration deadlines.

Mr. President, it is my strongly held view that we must be careful about attaching price tags to civil rights. Imagine if we had decided not to extend the right to vote to 18-year-olds, women, or other minorities because it would place a burden on the States due to an increased workload or the purchasing of new voting machines. The National Voter Registration Act is already making it easier for citizens to exercise one of the most fundamental rights of a democracy—the right to vote. A healthy democracy thrives on the active participation of the governed.

This important new law is clearly working and should not be repealed nor should its implementation be delayed as some have proposed.●

#### CUBAN LIBERTY AND DEMOCRATIC SOLIDARITY ACT—S. 381

● Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I am pleased to join several of my colleagues as a cosponsor of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, although I have reservations concerning the trade sanctions included in the legislation. Fidel Castro's 36-year dictatorship has been catastrophic for Cuba's society and economy. Agricultural and industrial production have been stymied by authoritarian state control. Many of Cuba's most skilled and talented citizens have chosen to risk their lives to achieve freedom elsewhere, including the United States. Meanwhile, living standards for those who remained have fallen steadily. The backward direction of Cuba's development stands in sharp contrast to other states in Central and South America, who have flourished under policies of market and democratic liberalization. Castro is among the last adherents to the bankrupt philosophy of Communist authoritarianism. The Cuban people cannot move forward to the prosperity which their human and natural resources entitle them as long as Castro's authoritarian rule remains intact. The United States must continue to do what it can to help the Cuban people in their struggle for economic and political freedom and to reestablish the rule of law.

We also have an obligation to American citizens, many of whom have unresolved property claims against the Castro government, to work for justice on their behalf. At the same time, I believe the United States must balance its goals in Cuba with other important foreign policy objectives, such as free trade and support for market and political reforms in other countries. Accordingly, I associate myself with the objectives of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act and look forward to working with my colleagues to improve the bill particularly in the